

Predictors of Adaptive Help Seeking Across Ninth Grade Students Enrolled in Advanced
Placement and International Baccalaureate Courses

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Abstract

This study explored how adaptive help seeking was related to academic self-efficacy, perfectionism (maladaptive and adaptive), attitudes towards help seeking (perceived benefits and perceived threats), and teacher emotional support among 311 grade 9 students in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes. Significant bivariate links emerged between adaptive help-seeking and all six potential correlates. Regression analyses indicated that teacher emotional support, adaptive perfectionism (high personal standards), and perceived benefits were significant, positive predictors of adaptive help seeking. Gender also was a significant predictor, as boys had lower levels of adaptive help seeking compared to girls. Furthermore, gender moderated the association between perceived benefits and adaptive help-seeking; perceived benefits were particularly highly associated with boys' adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers. Strategies for explicating the benefits of adaptive help seeking, promoting adaptive perfectionism, and fostering teacher emotional support are provided, as well as limitations and future directions for research.

Keywords: adaptive help seeking; gender; Advanced Placement; International Baccalaureate

Predictors of Adaptive Help Seeking Across Ninth Grade Students Enrolled in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Courses

As students are expected to successfully complete increasingly challenging schoolwork, scholars contend that academic help seeking among school-aged youth is inevitable (Ryan, Pintrich, & Midgley, 2001). Academic help seeking is a pupil-initiated process that entails students seeking assistance from adults and peers in order to complete course-related work requirements (Newman, 2002; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Although academic help seeking is positively associated with desired student outcomes (e.g., academic achievement and students' engagement in school; Schenke, Lam, Conley, & Karabenick, 2015), some students elect to not ask for help related to their schoolwork for various reasons. A number of studies have identified both personal (Shim, Rubenstein, & Drapeau, 2016; Tanaka, Murakami, Okuno, & Yamauchi, 2002) and contextual (Schenke et al., 2015) factors that relate to students' decision to seek academic help from their teachers and peers. There may also be demographic factors at play; research suggests that adolescent male students are less likely to engage in academic help seeking compared to their female peers (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998; Schenke et al., 2015; Tanaka et al., 2002), with some studies showing gender differences in several predictors of academic help seeking (Cheong, Parjares, & Oberman, 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Tanaka et al., 2002).

The literature pertaining to academic help seeking has generally included research studies conducted with diverse groups of students representing various age, socioeconomic, and racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan & Shim, 2012; Schenke et al., 2015; Shim et al., 2016). However, no studies have examined the relationship between academic help seeking and the various predictors exclusively among high school students enrolled in

accelerated high school courses. High school students enrolled in accelerated curricula in the form of college level courses are more likely to experience heightened levels of academic stress compared to their peers, which can impact their emotional wellbeing (Suldo, Shaunessy, & Hardesty, 2008; Suldo, Shaunessy, Thalji, Michalowski, & Shaffer, 2009). Despite support for positive outcomes experienced by Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) students who seek academic help to cope with stress (Suldo, Shaunessy-Dedrick, Ferron, & Dedrick, 2018), scholars have not investigated why AP/IB students may be more or less likely to seek help from their teachers and the factors associated with academic help seeking.

Approximately 24% of public high school students enroll in AP and IB courses each year (Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013), representing a significant portion of high school youth. The current study examined the relationship between specific predictor variables and academic help seeking across male and female high school freshmen enrolled in AP/IB courses. Understanding these relationships across various groups of students can inform intervention efforts that seek to promote school success for all students. This study aimed to identify significant predictors of AP/IB students' academic help seeking and explore whether gender moderates these relationships to provide insight into why ninth grade AP/IB male and female students may be more or less inclined to seek help from their teachers.

Academic Help Seeking and Student Outcomes

Academic help seeking is a self-regulated learning strategy that entails students taking the initiative to garner learning support with the goal of completing work independently (Newman, 1990). Academic help seeking is a multifaceted construct, conceptualized as being adaptive, expedient, or avoidant in nature. *Adaptive* (or instrumental) help seeking involves students asking for help with the intent to learn and master course content independently, whereas

expedient help seeking involves students asking for help simply for the sake of obtaining a correct answer (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan & Shim, 2012). As the name implies, *avoidant help seeking* refers to moments in which a student does not ask for help even when he or she may need assistance (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Researchers have investigated the relationship between all three aspects of academic help seeking and students' achievement and engagement in school.

Academic performance. Academic achievement among youth is positively related to *adaptive help seeking* and negatively related to *avoidant help seeking* (e.g., Ryan, Patrick, & Shim, 2005; Ryan & Shin, 2011). Research also suggests that the relationship between *expedient help seeking*, *adaptive help seeking* from peers, and student achievement is not comparable to the relationship between student achievement and *adaptive help seeking* from teachers. Case in point, Schenke, Lam, Conley, and Karabenick (2015) found that 7th-11th grade students who reported higher levels of *instrumental/adaptive help seeking* from teachers were more likely to earn higher scores on their end-of-year standardized tests, whereas *expedient help seeking* from teachers and peers, and *adaptive seeking* from peers were not significantly associated with changes in students' standardized test scores. Similarly, results from the Ryan and Shim (2012) study showed that *adaptive help seeking* from peers was not significantly related to students' grade point averages (GPAs), and *expedient help seeking* from peers actually had a significant inverse relationship with students' GPAs.

Student engagement. Broadly defined, student engagement refers to students' active involvement in and connection to the social and academic aspects of school (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), student engagement is a multifaceted construct that typically includes affective (emotional), behavioral, and cognitive sub-dimensions. Affective/emotional engagement refers to students' affective

reactions towards their teachers, the classroom environment, and school in general. This dimension of student engagement is also measured by the extent to which students feel a sense of belonging to their school, such as feeling strong, positive connections to their teachers and peers. Behavioral engagement refers to students' active participation in the various aspects of school (involved in learning and academic tasks and participation in extracurricular activities), and their demonstration of appropriate behaviors in the class and school environment. Finally, cognitive engagement refers to students' overall investment in their learning, such as experiencing greater levels of academic motivation and intentionally utilizing various self-regulated learning strategies to engage in deeper learning. Researchers have found significant relationships between students' help seeking behaviors and indicators of all three student engagement dimensions, such as students experiencing more positive emotions in class rather than negative emotions (affective engagement; Ryan et al., 2005; Shim et al., 2016), participating in class as opposed to engaging in disruptive behaviors (behavioral engagement; Shim et al. 2016), and using a variety of self-regulated learning strategies to increase their understanding of course content (cognitive engagement; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991).

Factors that Predict Student Adaptive Help Seeking

Personal factors. Several studies have examined personal and contextual variables that might explain why some students may be more or less inclined to engage in adaptive help seeking. Students' attitudes toward help seeking—their perceptions of the benefits and threats (e.g., being viewed as dumb) associated with seeking help—is one personal factor that has been extensively studied. Consequently, researchers have found that students are more prone to ask for academic help in an adaptive manner when they perceive academic help seeking as being associated with more benefits and fewer threats (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Tanaka et al., 2002).

Second, perceived academic self-efficacy (or cognitive competence) refers to students' judgement of their academic ability (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Students who have a high degree of academic self-efficacy tend to view themselves as more confident and competent learners. In previous studies, secondary students who reported greater levels of academic self-efficacy compared to their peers were also more inclined to reach out to teachers and peers for support (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan & Shin, 2011). Perfectionism is another personal variable that has been linked to help seeking to some degree. Although there is not an agreed upon definition of perfectionism in the literature, scholars tend to concur that perfectionism is generally represented by subcomponents that are categorized as adaptive (e.g., setting high goals; having high personal standards; being organized and concerned with order and neatness) or maladaptive (e.g., feeling distressed when mistakes are made or when there is a discrepancy between one's high standards and actual performance) (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi, & Ashby, 2001). Measures and studies of perfectionism have operationalized these components through advancing indicators of aspects of adaptive perfectionism (e.g., high personal standards and organization) and maladaptive perfectionism (e.g., discrepancy between behavioral standards and achievements) (Slaney et al., 2001). For example, Shim, Rubenstein, and Drapeau (2016) demonstrated a significant positive relationship between adaptive help seeking and adaptive perfectionism, as measured by the extent to which students reported setting high personal standards. Conversely, Shim et al. (2016) did not find a significant relationship between help seeking and maladaptive perfectionism, as measured by the extent to which students reported experiencing strong negative reactions in response to making mistakes.

Finally, students' achievement goal orientations may also be associated with their tendency to engage in adaptive help seeking. Mastery/task-oriented goals are reflected in a student's desire to acquire knowledge and understanding, whereas performance-oriented goals are reflected in a student's desire to engage in a task to receive or avoid external consequences, such as recognition from others (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Tanaka et al., 2002). Mixed findings pertaining to the relationship between students' help seeking behaviors and achievement goals have been reported in this body of research. While some researchers found that mastery goals were positively and significantly associated with adaptive help seeking (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997), other researchers observed that a mastery goal orientation was indirectly or not associated with adaptive help seeking when attitudes toward help seeking was included as a mediator in statistical models (Tanaka et al., 2002). Similarly, performance goals have been found to be both positively and inversely related to adaptive help seeking (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan et al., 2005; Tanaka et al., 2002), associated with adaptive help seeking only when partially mediated by attitudes toward help seeking (Tanaka et al., 2002), or unrelated to adaptive help seeking altogether (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

Contextual factors. Although most studies have examined the influence of personal factors on students' academic help seeking, teacher emotional support is one contextual variable that has particularly received attention in a few academic help seeking studies. In previous studies (see Ryan et al., 2005 and Schenke et al., 2015), teacher emotional support was defined as the degree to which students believed their teachers created a positive classroom climate; responded to individual student's emotional and academic needs; and regarded their perspectives as adolescents (e.g., listening to students' ideas). As expected, students who tended to engage in less help seeking avoidance and more adaptive help seeking behaviors also tended to report

higher rates of perceived teacher emotional support (Ryan et al., 2005; Schenke et al., 2015).

These results are unsurprising, considering the positive association between affective engagement and adaptive help seeking, and positive teacher-student relationships are central to students' affective engagement.

Student Demographic Characteristics

Studies suggest that male students across multiple age groups are less likely to ask for help compared to their female counterparts (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan et al., 1998; Schenke et al., 2015; Tanaka et al., 2002). Along the same vein, research findings also have demonstrated significant gender differences in some of the aforementioned predictor variables, including students' academic self-efficacy (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan et al., 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997) and attitudes towards help seeking (Cheong et al., 2004; Tanaka et al., 2002). In spite of these findings, it remains unclear whether gender moderates the relationship between students' adaptive help seeking and these (and other) predictor variables.

Most help seeking research examining the impact of key predictors has been conducted with middle school students or 9th-12th grade students altogether. Studying academic help seeking among a focused group of ninth grade students might be more informative, given that ninth grade represents a key transition year in which students' experiences strongly predict later school completion, and their school experiences might be somewhat unique compared to 10th - 12th grade students (Neild, Stoner-Eby, & Furstenberg, 2008). Furthermore, students enrolled in AP/IB courses are a relatively unique group of students due to their heightened risk of experiencing greater academic related stress compared to their peers in general education at the same school, which can impact AP/IB students' emotional well-being (Suldo et al., 2008; Suldo et al., 2009). A recent study of students in AP and IB courses identified seeking academic

support (i.e., from teachers, tutors, and classmates) as a way of coping with academic stressors that tended to co-occur with other approach strategies (e.g., time and task management, turn to family) on a higher-order coping style reflecting problem-focused coping strategies (Suldo et al., 2018). Higher levels of problem-focused coping predicted better emotional well-being, whereas responding to school-related stressors by isolating oneself and attempting to handle problems alone predicted worse mental health. Despite such support for the positive outcomes experienced by AP and IB students who seek academic support as a stress-related coping behavior, no research has been conducted to identify factors that may be associated with male and female AP/IB students' academic help seeking from their teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore factors associated with adaptive help seeking among 9th grade AP/IB students. To date, no published studies have examined academic efficacy, attitude toward help seeking, perfectionism, and teacher emotional support simultaneously in relation to help seeking behavior among this group of students. This study also sought to determine whether gender moderates the relationship between the predictor variables and adaptive help seeking. We chose to investigate academic self-efficacy, attitude toward help seeking (benefits and threats), perfectionism, and teacher emotional support in relation to adaptive help seeking because these variables have consistently been found to be associated with and predict adaptive help seeking among similar aged students. In terms of the dependent variable, we specifically focused on students' experiences with seeking help from their classroom teachers because the current body of research indicates that adaptive help seeking from teachers is especially beneficial compared to adaptive help seeking from peers.

We hypothesized that adaptive perfectionism, perceived benefits of help seeking, academic efficacy, and teacher emotional support would be positively related to adaptive help seeking, whereas maladaptive perfectionism and perceived threats of help seeking would be negatively related to adaptive help seeking. We hypothesized a main effect of gender on adaptive help-seeking, with boys reporting lower levels. We also expected to find that gender would moderate the strength of significant relationships between student beliefs and adaptive help seeking, for example the positive effect of academic efficacy or perceived benefits of help seeking on adaptive help seeking may be stronger for males than females. However, we did not develop hypotheses regarding which specific predictors would interact with gender, and whether the associations of those variables with adaptive help seeking would be stronger for girls than boys and vice versa, due to an absence of previous research that examined gender as a moderator.

Methods

Participants

Participants included 311 (59.2% females, 40.8% male) 9th grade students attending two public high schools in one large school district in the southeastern United States. Participants enrolled in School A were taking AP classes ($n = 172$), and participants enrolled in School B were in a “pre-IB” program of study ($n = 139$). Details on the School Directory Information webpages of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) indicate that School A is a large suburb locale, serving 2,355 students (51.3% female; 21.2% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; 63.1% White, 23.6% Hispanic, 6.3% Black, 2.4% Asian, 4.2% multiracial, <1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, <1% American Indian/Alaska Native). School B is a large city locale, serving 1639 students (52.0% female; 43.9% eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; 46.8% White, 22.8% Hispanic, 14.5% Black, 7.4% Asian, 8.2% multiracial, <1% Native

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, <1% American Indian/Alaska Native). Participants in the combined AP/IB sample ranged in age from 13-15 years ($M = 13.99$; $SD = 0.27$). A majority of participants (79.4%) identified themselves as White, 6.3% Black, 14.6% Asian, 2% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 2.7% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 7.6% of another racial/ethnic background. Of those students, 23% also identified themselves as Hispanic. The demographic features of this sample are consistent with other research findings indicating that Black students are underrepresented in AP and IB (Kolluri, 2018; Wildhagen, 2014). A total of 77% of participants reported their parents were married, and most parents had at least a college (e.g., 4-year degree) education (75% mother, 67.7% father).

Measures

Adaptive Help Seeking. The Adaptive Help Seeking (AHS) measure is a six-item scale that was developed by Ryan and Pintrich (1997) to assess students' adaptive/instrumental help seeking behaviors in the classroom environment. Measures of expedient and avoidant help-seeking were not examined in the current study. Researchers have used the AHS to assess students' adaptive help seeking behaviors in specific classes, across classes, and with peers and teachers. Due to our research question and the participants taking multiple classes, we adapted the measure to assess students' adaptive help seeking from teachers across multiple classes (e.g., If I need help in class, I ask my teachers to give me hints or clues rather than the answer). Students reported the degree to which each adaptive help seeking behavior was accurate for them. All items were measured with a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all true* to 5 = *very true*). Higher average scores represent a higher level of adaptive help seeking from teachers. In a study involving 203 7th and 8th grade students, Ryan and Pintrich (1997) reported high internal consistency ($\alpha = .77$). Similarly, moderate to high Cronbach's alphas have been reported in

previous studies that adapted the AHS to examine predictors of adaptive help seeking among high school students, including 9th graders (e.g., $\alpha = .67$ to $.89$; Pajares, Cheong, & Oberman, 2004; Tanaka et al., 2002). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha of the AHS measure was $.80$.

Attitudes Toward Help Seeking. The Attitudes Toward Help Seeking (ATHS) scale developed by Ryan and Pintrich (1997) was used to assess the participants' perceptions of the benefits and threats associated with seeking help from their teachers. Due to our research aim and the participants taking multiple classes, we adapted the measure to assess students' perceptions of the benefits and threats associated with asking multiple teachers for help (e.g., Asking my teachers questions in class makes the class more interesting for me). In previous research, perceived benefits and threats associated with help seeking were reported as distinct scales (Pajares et al., 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Tanaka et al., 2002). Thus, perceived benefits (4 items; e.g., I think asking my teachers questions helps me learn) and threats (5 items; e.g., I think the teachers might think I am dumb if I ask a question in class) were assessed as two separate scales with the same Likert-type response metric that ranged from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*). Students reported the degree to which each statement was accurate for them, and higher average scores on each scale represent a higher level of perceived benefits and threats. In previous samples of middle (7th-8th grade) and high school students (9th-12th grade), researchers have reported high coefficient alphas for perceived benefits ($\alpha = .78$ to $.89$) and perceived threats from teachers and peers ($\alpha = .77$ to $.86$; Pajares et al., 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Tanaka et al., 2002). In the current study, Cronbach's alphas of the perceived benefits and perceived threats scales were $.80$ and $.86$, respectively.

Academic Efficacy. The Academic Self-Perception (ASP) scale from the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R) scale was used to assess participants' self-

evaluation of their academic abilities. The SAAS-R is a 35-item scale that assesses adolescents' attitudes toward learning and school through five scales, including general academic self-perceptions (7 items; e.g., I can learn new ideas quickly in school). On the SASS-R, participants rate how strongly they agree or disagree with the items on a Likert-type agreement scale that ranges from 1 to 7 (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Higher average scores represent a higher level of academic self-efficacy. The SAAS-R demonstrated reasonable fit, $\chi^2(550) = 1,581.7$, CFI = .911, TLI = .918, RMSEA = .059, SRMR = .057 through confirmatory factor analysis with gifted high school students (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). In addition, all five factors (including the ASP) have been found to correlate with each other, with inter-factor correlations ranging from .34 to .74. McCoach and Siegle (2003) also reported the ASP subscale as reliable ($\alpha = .86$); and Dedrick, Shaunessy-Dedrick, Suldo, and Ferron (2015) reported a high Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the ASP subscale ($\alpha = .88$) in a study that involved 589 pre-IB 9th and 10th grade students. In the current study, Cronbach alpha for the ASP was .89.

Teacher Emotional Support. The Teacher Emotional Support Scale (TESS) is a four-item measure that is based on the work of Johnson, Johnson, and Anderson (1983) and has been used in previous academic help seeking research (e.g., Kiefer & Shim, 2016; Ryan & Shim, 2012). We administered the TESS to assess the participants' perceptions of emotional support from their current classroom teachers (e.g., My teachers try to help me when I am sad or upset). Students endorsed statements using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*). Higher average scores represent a higher level of perceived teacher emotional support. Ryan and Shim (2012) reported strong Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the TESS ($\alpha = .74$ to .84) when administered to the same sample of middle school students at three separate times. The Cronbach's alpha for the TESS in the present study was .84.

Perfectionism. The Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) developed by Slaney and colleagues (2001) was used to examine the adaptive and maladaptive components of perfectionism among students. Only the Standards (7 items) and Discrepancy (12 items) scales were used in this study, consistent with how perfectionism has been measured in prior research (Shaunessy-Dedrick, Suldo, & Friedrich, 2011). The Standards scale (adaptive component) measures the extent to which students set high standards for themselves (e.g., I have high expectations for myself); and the Discrepancy scale (maladaptive component) measures students' perceptions of the amount of distress they experience as a result of the perceived differences between their performance and personal standards (e.g., My best just never seems to be good enough for me). All items use a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Rice, Ashby, and Gilman (2011) proposed that high scores on the Standards and Discrepancy scales are indicative of maladaptive perfectionism, whereas adaptive perfectionism is indexed by higher scores on the Standards scale coupled with lower scores on the Discrepancy scale. Thus, excessive concerns and distress about one's performance is a key distinction between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism. In the current study and consistent with prior research on high achieving students (Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2011), higher average scores on the Standards scale was used to index adaptive perfectionism and higher average scores on the Discrepancy scale was used to index maladaptive perfectionism. Other researchers who utilized these scales in their studies reported Cronbach's alphas between .80 to .87 for the Standards subscale and .85 to .90 for the Discrepancy subscale (Accordino, Accordino, & Slaney, 2000; Nounopoulos, Ashby, & Gilman, 2006). The current study found both the Standards ($\alpha = .87$) and Discrepancy ($\alpha = .91$) subscales to have high internal consistency reliability.

Procedure

Data collection for the current study occurred at a single time point (spring 2017) within a large multi-year intervention development study. All participants examined in the current study also took part in a new classroom-based universal social-emotional learning program in the fall 2016 semester. The spring 2017 survey data collection was part of an effort to evaluate student change over time in a number of constructs, including some targeted by the universal intervention (e.g., way of coping with academic stress) whereas other constructs (e.g., perfectionism) were not targeted by the intervention but included in the data collection for the aims of the current study.

At the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, teachers assisted with participant recruitment through distributing a consent form explaining the purpose and research activities within the larger project to all 9th grade AP students in School A and all 9th grade IB students in School B. Incentives were provided for return of signed parent consent forms (e.g., inclusion in drawings for a \$25 gift card) and completion of survey packets (e.g., \$10 movie pass to a local theater or iTunes gift cards for each student). As aforementioned, school administrators elected to adopt the universal and selective intervention as a standard service for all 9th grade AP and IB students, which may have contributed to the high response rate for informed consent (participation rate=92.98%; 3.65% of parents declined consent, and 3.37% of students did not return parent consent forms).

Students completed the self-report measures analyzed in the current study in addition to other measures related to the intervention study. All surveys were completed during the school day in the classes in which the universal curriculum was delivered (i.e., AP Human Geography or IB Inquiry Skills). In accordance with the policies of our university's institutional review

board (IRB), we informed students that the purpose of the surveys was to understand their current school experiences, their responses would be kept confidential, and participation was completely voluntary. Completion of all measures took approximately 45 minutes. To minimize order effects, the measures were arranged in four different orders and each student was randomly assigned one of the four versions of the survey packet. Student demographic information reported in this paper was also collected via self-report at a wave of data collection that occurred earlier in the school year.

Overview of Data Analysis Plan

A total of 331 participants were originally included in this study. However, twenty of the cases had missing data on one or more variables. Given that less than 10% of data was missing, we removed those cases from data analysis, which resulted in the final sample of 311. All data analyses were conducted using the Statistical Analysis Software (SAS). An alpha level of .05 was used to determine statistical significance. Bivariate correlations were calculated to explore the relationships between the six variables of interest (adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism, perceived threats associated with help seeking, perceived benefits associated with help seeking, teacher emotional support, and academic self-efficacy) and adaptive help seeking. We then used multiple regression to examine the extent to which the six variables of interest and gender predicted adaptive help seeking among the entire student sample. A dummy-coded school variable was entered as a covariate in this and the subsequent regression analysis to control for the potential influence of school membership in predicting adaptive help seeking above and beyond what can be expected by any between-school differences. We used this fixed-effect approach rather than multi-level modeling due to the small number of schools ($n=2$). Beta weights were examined to determine which specific factor uniquely predicted adaptive help

seeking. Finally, squared semipartial correlations (uniqueness indices) were calculated for each predictor to provide an index of how much unique variance in adaptive help seeking was accounted for by a given variable when controlling for the other variables.

An additional regression analysis was conducted to test gender as a moderator in the relationship between the variables of interest and adaptive help seeking. Because gender is thought to moderate the strength of a relationship (e.g., the positive effect of perceived benefits may be stronger for males than females) as opposed to moderating the sign of the relationship (i.e. the relationship is positive for one gender and negative for the other), we only included interaction terms for predictor variables that were found to have significant effects in the first regression model. More specifically, we created the product of the gender dummy variable (0=female; 1=male) and each significant predictor from our first model and then simultaneously entered all the variables in the first regression model and these interaction terms into a single regression analysis. Significant regression coefficients for the interaction terms suggest that the relation between the various variables and adaptive help seeking differed between adolescent males and females.

Results

Bivariate Associations

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and Person product-moment correlations among all continuous variables. Acceptable levels of skew (-0.34 to 0.18) and kurtosis (-0.45 to 0.96) were obtained for each variable. The majority of the intercorrelations between the seven variables were statistically significant ($p < .05$) and ranged in magnitude from small to large ($r = -.06$ to $.58$). The strongest bivariate relationships was between adaptive help seeking and perceived benefits associated with adaptive help seeking from teachers ($r = .58$).

Regarding associations between the predictors and criterion variable, adaptive help seeking from teachers yielded small to moderate inverse, significant relationships with maladaptive perfectionism and perceived threats associated with help seeking ($r = -.14$ to $-.17$), and moderate to large positive, significant associations with adaptive perfectionism, perceived benefits, academic self-efficacy, and teacher emotional support ($r = .24$ to $.58$). Regarding associations between predictors, only one association was large in magnitude ($r = .49$, between adaptive perfectionism and academic efficacy), which may make it difficult to identify a unique effect of one of those variables when both are included in multivariate analyses.

Predictors of Adaptive Help Seeking from Teachers: Multivariate Associations

Regression model. The results from the regression analyses predicting adaptive help seeking from teachers from adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism, perceived threats associated with academic help seeking, perceived benefits associated with academic help seeking, academic self-efficacy, teacher emotional support, and gender are shown in Table 2. Among the total sample ($N = 311$), the linear combination of the fixed effect of school and the seven predictor variables accounted for 41% of the variance in adaptive help seeking, $F(8, 302) = 27.39, p < 0.001, R^2 = .405$. The main effect of school was not significant, $b = -0.07, t(302) = -1.47, \beta = -0.06, p = .14, \text{uniqueness} = .004$. Students who had higher levels of adaptive perfectionism showed higher levels of adaptive help seeking from teachers, $b = 0.14, t(302) = 3.23, \beta = 0.16, p = .0014, \text{uniqueness} = .02$. In addition, students who perceived more benefits associated with help seeking showed higher levels of adaptive help seeking from teachers, $b = 0.42, t(302) = 9.83, \beta = 0.48, p < .0001, \text{uniqueness} = .19$; and students who perceived teachers as being emotionally supportive showed higher levels of adaptive help seeking from teachers, $b = 0.09, t(302) = 2.17, \beta = 0.11, p < .03, \text{uniqueness} = .01$. Furthermore, males showed less

adaptive help seeking, $b = -0.17$, $t(302) = -2.38$, $\beta = -0.11$, $p = .02$, uniqueness = .01.

Maladaptive perfectionism, perceived threats associated with academic help seeking, and academic self-efficacy were not statistically significantly related to adaptive help seeking after controlling for the other variables in the model. Uniqueness indices (squared semipartial correlations) demonstrated that perceived benefits associated with help seeking accounted for the largest amount of variance (19%). The unique effects of adaptive perfectionism, teacher emotional support, and gender were smaller (for 2%, 1%, and 1% of the variance, respectively).

Moderated regression model. To examine whether the effects of adaptive perfectionism, perceived benefits of academic help seeking, and teacher emotional support were moderated by gender, three interaction terms (i.e., interactions between gender and adaptive perfectionism, gender and perceived benefits, and gender and teacher emotional support) were simultaneously added to the previous model. The results of the moderated regression are provided in Table 3. For females (our reference group) adaptive perfectionism was positively associated with adaptive help seeking from teachers, $b = 0.17$, $t(302) = 2.99$, $\beta = 0.20$, $p = .003$, uniqueness = .02. This coefficient was not moderated significantly by gender, $b = -0.06$, $t(302) = -0.78$, $\beta = -0.23$, $p = .43$, uniqueness = .00. Similarly for females, teacher emotional support was positively related to help seeking, $b = 0.15$, $t(302) = 2.87$, $\beta = 0.19$, $p = .005$, uniqueness = .02). Because the interaction effect has a coefficient of -0.14, the sample estimate for males is 0.01 (i.e., $0.15 - 0.14$), however, this difference in coefficients between males and females is not statistically significant, $b = -0.14$, $t(302) = -1.76$, $\beta = -0.31$, $p = .078$, uniqueness = 0.01). Finally, for females there was a positive association between perceived benefits associated with academic help seeking and adaptive help seeking from teachers, $b = 0.34$, $t(302) = 5.75$, $\beta = 0.39$, $p < .001$, uniqueness = 0.06, and this positive association was significantly greater for

males, $b = 0.18$, $t(302) = 2.03$, $\beta = 0.39$, $p = .043$, uniqueness = 0.01). This significant interaction between gender and perceived benefits is plotted in Figure 1, which shows the positive effect of perceived benefit on adaptive help seeking is greater for males than females.

Discussion

This cross-sectional study explored the associations between 9th grade AP/IB students' adaptive help seeking from teachers and personal as well as contextual variables. Results from the bivariate analysis indicated that students' adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers was significantly associated with adaptive perfectionism, perceived benefits, academic efficacy, and teacher emotional support in a positive direction, as well as inversely associated with perceived threats and maladaptive perfectionism, underscoring the links between personal and contextual factors and adaptive help seeking. Together, those factors accounted for about 40% of the variability in individual students' levels of help-seeking. Of the observed personal and contextual predictors, adaptive perfectionism, perceived benefits, and teacher emotional support were significantly linked to adaptive help seeking from teachers when controlling for the other variables. Perceived benefits showed the strongest link to adaptive help seeking, accounting for 19% of the total variance above and beyond that explained by other predictors in the model. Gender was also significantly linked to adaptive help seeking, with male students being significantly *less* likely to ask teachers for help compared to female students. Regarding the moderating role of gender, perceived benefits evidenced stronger links with adaptive help seeking for males than females; males with low scores on perceived benefits had even lower levels of adaptive help seeking than females who perceived relatively few benefits.

The positive, significant bivariate relationships found between adaptive help seeking, adaptive perfectionism, perceived benefits associated with help seeking, academic efficacy, and

teacher emotional support are consistent with previous studies demonstrating similar relationships (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Schenke et al., 2015; Shim et al., 2016; Tanaka et al., 2002). Likewise, the negative correlation found between adaptive help seeking and perceived threats associated with help seeking is similar to previous research findings showing significant inverse relationships between these two variables (Tanaka et al., 2002). The current study found a significant negative relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and adaptive help seeking from teachers, whereas research with a younger group of adolescents did not find an association between help seeking from peers and a form of maladaptive perfectionism that entailed concern over making mistakes (Shim et al., 2016). Differences between samples might contribute to these distinct findings, as researchers have found that maladaptive perfectionism tends to increase across grade levels (Margot & Rinn, 2016; Shaunessy-Dedrick et al., 2011). It is possible that maladaptive perfectionism was more pronounced and salient for 9th grade students as compared to the middle school students in Shim et al.'s (2016) study.

This current study is unique in its exploration of the link between adaptive help seeking from teachers, a range of personal factors, and perceived teacher emotional support. Prior investigations of adaptive help seeking have (a) reported significant links between adaptive help seeking and the targeted predictors in separate studies, (b) examined the link between one or more targeted predictor(s) and students' adaptive help seeking behaviors with no indication of from whom students sought help (e.g., Tanaka et al., 2002), or (c) only focused on adaptive help seeking from peers (e.g., Shim et al., 2016). We specifically focused on the participants' adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers in light of previous studies suggesting that adaptive help seeking from teachers may have a greater impact on students' academic outcomes compared to

classroom peers (Schenke et al., 2015). We also were interested in identifying predictor variables that may related to ninth grade AP/IB students' decision to seek help from their teachers given their enrollment in a critical transition school year (Neild et al., 2008) and heightened vulnerability to experiencing increased academic related stress (Suldo et al., 2008, 2009). Consequently, findings from this study provide a more nuanced understanding of why 9th grade AP/IB students may or may not seek academic help from their teachers.

Ninth grade AP/IB students may be more inclined to ask teachers for help in an adaptive manner when they have high personal standards (adaptive perfectionism), perceive help seeking as beneficial, and perceive their teachers as emotionally supportive. These findings align with previous research showing that teacher emotional support (Schenke et al., 2015) and perceived benefits associated with help seeking are important predictors of adaptive help seeking among high school students (Tanaka et al., 2002). Likewise, similar to Shim et al. (2016) who found that adaptive perfectionism was a significant predictor of middle school students' help seeking behaviors, the results of the current study also identified adaptive perfectionism as a significant unique predictor of 9th grade AP/IB students' adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers. As few studies have investigated perfectionism as a predictor of adaptive help seeking, this study adds to the academic help seeking literature by underscoring the link between adaptive help seeking and adaptive perfectionism—specifically, holding high expectations for one's performance— among another group of students (i.e., high school students who are enrolled in AP/IB courses).

The results of this study also are consistent with previous studies demonstrating significant differences in adaptive help seeking between male and female students. Specifically, previous studies found that upper elementary (Ryan et al., 1998), middle and high school females

were more likely to ask their teachers for instrumental/adaptive help compared to their male peers (Cheong et al., 2004; Ryan et al., 1998; Schenke et al., 2015; Tanaka et al., 2002).

Comparable findings were observed in the current study, providing further support for the position that male students from various backgrounds are generally less likely to ask teachers for help in an adaptive manner compared to their female peers. However, few studies have researched whether gender moderates the relationship between adaptive help seeking and the targeted predictor variables. Schenke et al. (2015) investigated whether gender moderated the relationship between adaptive help seeking and the classroom climate, including teacher emotional support. Similar to the findings reported by Schenke et al. (2015), in our sample gender did not moderate the link between teacher emotional support and students' adaptive help seeking, suggesting that the direction and strength of the association between these two constructs were not significantly different for boys and girls. In contrast, findings from the current study indicated that perceived benefits evidenced an even stronger link with adaptive help seeking for males than females. In particular, male 9th grade AP/IB students may be even less inclined to seek help from their teachers when they do not view help seeking as beneficial.

Implications

Results suggest that 9th grade AP/IB students who set high standards for their personal performance, view help seeking as beneficial, and perceive their teachers as emotionally supportive may be more prone to seek academic support from classroom teachers. The following review of practice implications suggests how these predictor variables may be addressed based on prior research. However, it is premature to conclude that addressing each of these predictor variables will promote increased help-seeking among 9th grade AP/IB students given the cross-sectional correlational nature of the study.

Ninth grade AP/IB students may be particularly likely to have established goals and high personal standards due to their history of academic achievement, which may lead to student enrollment in accelerated coursework (LoCicero & Ashby, 2000; Shaunessy et al., 2011). Nevertheless, this study found that higher levels of personal standards for performance, even within a sample that may have a restricted range, played a significant role in the frequency of adaptive help seeking. Most scholarship in the current literature on perfectionism focuses on conceptualization (e.g., adaptive versus maladaptive perfectionism), how both aspects of perfectionism are linked to various outcomes, and how to help individuals cope with behaviors and thoughts associated with maladaptive perfectionism. There is less guidance on how to promote adaptive perfectionism. Previous research has, however, established links between indicators of maladaptive and adaptive perfectionism and students' use of various coping strategies. For instance, Stoeber and Janssen (2011) found that college students who reported higher levels of aspects of maladaptive perfectionism used more self-blame and less frequent use of active coping strategies to cope with daily failures, whereas students who reported higher levels of perfectionistic strivings (i.e., set high personal standards) used less self-blame to cope with daily failures. Accordingly, encouraging students to set high standards should be coupled with providing them skills training in healthy styles of coping with stressors and perceived failures. More research is needed to determine the most effective approaches for promoting adaptive perfectionism among AP/IB students given the scarcity of research in this area.

In addition to promoting high standards among all AP/IB students, it may be advantageous to seek definitions of adaptive help seeking from teachers to share with these students as well as an explanation of the benefits of using this particular learning strategy. This suggestion is based on recommendations outlined in the learning strategy literature (e.g.,

Gleason, Archer, & Colvin, 2010) given that adaptive help seeking is identified as a self-regulated learning strategy (Newman, 1990). In particular, Gleason, Archer, and Colvin (2010) proposed that students are likely to utilize targeted learning strategies when they clearly understand what specific strategies entail. As an example, 9th grade biology students who participated in a self-regulated learning intervention increased their use of select self-regulated learning strategies compared to a control group of students after learning about the strategies of foci (Cleary, Platten, & Nelson, 2008). Thus, to increase AP/IB 9th grade students' use of adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers, educators and other support personnel (e.g., school psychologists) can (a) provide explicit instruction outlining the definition of adaptive help seeking, (b) model how to engage in adaptive help seeking from teachers, and (c) provide reinforcement and corrective feedback as needed when they observe students using this learning strategy (Cleary et al., 2008; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). Educators can also compare adaptive help seeking with expedient help seeking to further illustrate the practical differences between these two constructs.

Considering our research findings and existing scholarship (Gleason et al., 2010), it appears particularly important to highlight the benefits of adaptive help seeking. First, students may profit from hearing about the many benefits associated with adaptive help seeking (e.g., increased academic performance and greater understanding of course content) as discussed in extant research and as illustrated by exemplar high school peers. By example, teachers might invite their older students to share the benefits of adaptive help seeking in a manner that may be particularly palatable to 9th grade AP/IB students. As observing personal benefits associated with the use of targeted learning strategies is particularly useful, encouraging students to monitor the frequency and outcomes of their own use of adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers may

be helpful. For example, this evaluative component can consist of students plotting their academic performance after engaging in adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers to provide concrete evidence of its usefulness (see Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). Using these tactics to shed light on the benefits of adaptive help seeking for 9th grade AP/IB males is especially imperative considering our findings regarding the greater consequences of low perceived benefits (i.e., association with particularly low adaptive help seeking) for males in particular.

Teacher emotional support is another factor to address when seeking to increase 9th grade AP/IB adaptive help seeking behaviors. Based on the current study and prior research, teachers can display emotional support by engaging in a variety of behaviors. Some examples include respecting students' opinions, trying to understand how students feel, acknowledging students' feelings, providing support when students are sad or upset, being available to provide help, and treating students fairly (Schenke et al., 2015). Emotional support from teachers also can be manifested by the type of classroom climate they promote. Specifically, teachers can convey emotional support when they encourage students to demonstrate respectful behaviors in class (e.g., respecting each other's ideas), help one another with their schoolwork, and share ideas with each other (Ruzek et al., 2016; Schenke et al., 2015). Alongside the discussion of the aforementioned strategies for *how* to demonstrate emotional support to students, school mental health staff can share summary findings from the current study with teachers to illustrate *why* doing so is important, as this study identifies yet another positive outcome associated with perceived emotional support. Finally, as students' perspectives about and interpretations of teachers' behaviors are crucial to their perceptions of teacher emotional support (Suldo et al., 2009), teachers should also be encouraged to acquire feedback from students about their own

perceptions of care and support. Seeking such feedback may begin with questions such as “what do teachers do or say that conveys support to you?”

Parents also play an integral role in promoting students’ use of help seeking behaviors in the classroom (Bong, 2008; Newman, 2000). Although family predictors of help-seeking were not examined explicitly in this study, guidance can be gleaned from the broader literature that informs how youth form beliefs and learn social behaviors. For school-age youth, parents can help facilitate students’ adaptive help seeking behaviors, in lieu of help seeking avoidance, by (a) modeling how to ask for help; (b) using hints instead of immediately giving their children the answer to every inquiry they have; and (c) encouraging their children to engage in reflection and self-questioning when attempting to solve various problems on their own (Newman, 2000). Newman also noted that parents should invite their children to partake in collaborative problem-solving alongside adults at home, so that children understand it is acceptable for one to need support when challenges arise. School-based efforts may be most effective when educators partner with students’ families (NASP, 2012). In the spirit of promoting school-family partnerships (NASP, 2012), educators might offer to parents strategies they can employ at home to compliment school efforts and encourage their children to ask for help in an adaptive manner.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study provides important information regarding the predictors of adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers among 9th grade AP/IB students, the findings should be interpreted within the limitations of the study. First, the students in our study were recruited through convenience sampling given their participation in the universal curriculum (Tier 1) that primarily targeted coping with academic stress and engagement in school. One of the modules in the universal curriculum reviewed the importance of seeking emotional and academic support

from teachers, peers, and families. Although that particular module did not specifically focus on adaptive help seeking and the predictors examined in the current study, it is plausible that the results (e.g., relatively large association with perceived benefits) were impacted by the students' participation in the universal program. Second, the participants only included students from two schools and the majority of the students were White. The small number of schools precluded the use of multi-level modeling, and the results of the study may not generalize to more culturally diverse students who are enrolled in other schools. Future research studies should replicate this study with a larger sample of diverse students who are recruited from a larger number of schools, with varying levels of exposure to interventions targeting constructs relevant to adaptive help seeking. Furthermore, future research should measure other aspects of perfectionism (e.g., organization, high parent expectations, parent criticism, and perfectionistic expectations for others; Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Slaney et al., 2001) and use other methods of data collection (e.g., teacher ratings of students' adaptive help seeking behaviors) as executed by Ryan and Shin (2011) to triangulate and validate youth self-reports. Sole reliance on student self-report data is subject to many biases, including the possibility that the research participants primarily endorsed items that would depict them in a positive light. Finally, the results of this study are limited by the cross-sectional data collection. Future studies should employ a longitudinal design to test the direction of relationships illustrated in the current study.

Despite these limitations, the results of the current study advance the literature by demonstrating that 9th grade AP/IB students may be more likely to ask their teachers for help in an adaptive manner when they have high levels of adaptive perfectionism, perceive their teachers as providing more emotional support, and perceive greater benefits associated with academic help seeking. The current study also illustrates that males may be particularly at-risk for low

levels of adaptive help seeking from classroom teachers, and increased awareness of the potential benefits of seeking help from teachers may be especially helpful to male AP/IB students. Future research that includes randomized control trials that experimentally manipulate students' perceived benefits of help-seeking, adaptive perfectionism, and perceived teacher support can show that these manipulations result in greater adaptive help seeking and ultimately more positive student outcomes. Such findings would strengthen the rationale for school mental health providers and other educators to target these three factors to improve 9th grade AP/IB students' adaptive help seeking.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Intercorrelations Among Predictor and Outcome Variables (n =311)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Adaptive Help Seeking	1						
2. Adaptive Perfectionism	.37***	1					
3. Maladaptive Perfectionism	-.14*	-.18**	1				
4. Perceived Threats	-.17**	-.06	.38***	1			
5. Perceived Benefits	.58***	.28***	-.24***	-.23***	1		
6. Academic Efficacy	.36***	.49***	-.38***	-.22**	.20**	1	
7. Teacher Emotional Support	.24***	.28***	-.29***	-.35***	.39***	.21**	1
Mean	3.61	5.88	3.50	2.52	3.37	5.60	3.34
Standard Deviation	0.76	0.91	1.20	1.03	0.87	0.95	0.97
Skewness	-0.55	-0.96	0.15	0.18	-0.45	-0.76	-0.34
Kurtosis	0.26	0.86	-0.53	-0.85	0.12	0.96	-0.45

Note. Adaptive help seeking, perceived threats, perceived benefits, teacher emotional support (range 1-5); academic efficacy, adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism (range 1-7).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Predictors of Adaptive Help Seeking from Teachers: Multiple Regression Results

Variable	<i>b</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Squared semi-partial correlations
Intercept	0.72	0.36	0	2.01	.05	-
Adaptive Perfectionism	0.14**	0.04	0.16	3.23	.00	.02
Maladaptive Perfectionism	0.05	0.03	0.08	1.46	.14	.00
Perceived Threats	-0.02	0.04	-0.02	-0.43	.67	.00
Perceived Benefits	0.42***	0.04	0.48	9.83	<.00	.19
Academic Efficacy	0.07	0.04	0.09	1.77	.07	.01
Teacher Emotional Support	0.09*	0.04	0.11	2.17	.03	.01
Male	-0.17*	0.07	-0.11	-2.38	.02	.01
School	-0.07	0.05	-0.06	-1.47	.14	.004

Note. School and male are dummy references (0/1). Residual analyses showed no violations to the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Predictors of Adaptive Help Seeking from Teachers: Moderated Regression Results

Variable	<i>B</i>	SE <i>b</i>	β	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Squared semi-partial correlations
Intercept	0.65	0.42	0	1.52	.12	-
Adaptive Perfectionism	0.17**	0.06	0.20	2.99	.00	.02
Maladaptive Perfectionism	0.04	0.03	0.06	1.16	.25	.00
Perceived Threats	-0.01	0.04	-0.02	-0.40	.69	.00
Perceived Benefits	0.34***	0.06	0.39	5.75	<.00	.06
Academic Efficacy	0.08	0.04	0.09	1.83	.07	.01
Teacher Emotional Support	0.15**	0.05	0.19	2.87	.00	.02
Male	0.07	0.47	0.04	0.14	.89	.00
School	-0.08	0.05	-0.07	-1.66	.10	.01
AdaptP x Male	-0.06	0.08	-0.23	-0.78	.43	.00
PB x Male	0.18*	0.09	0.39	2.03	.04	.01
TES x Male	-0.14	0.08	-0.31	-1.76	.08	.01

Note. AdaptP = Adaptive Perfectionism; PB = Perceived Benefits; TES = Teacher Emotional Support. School and male are dummy references (0/1). AdaptP x Male represents the interaction term between gender and adaptive perfectionism. PB x Male represents the interaction term between gender and perceived benefits associated with academic help seeking. TES x Male represents the interaction term between gender and perceived teacher emotional support. Residual analyses showed no violations to the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

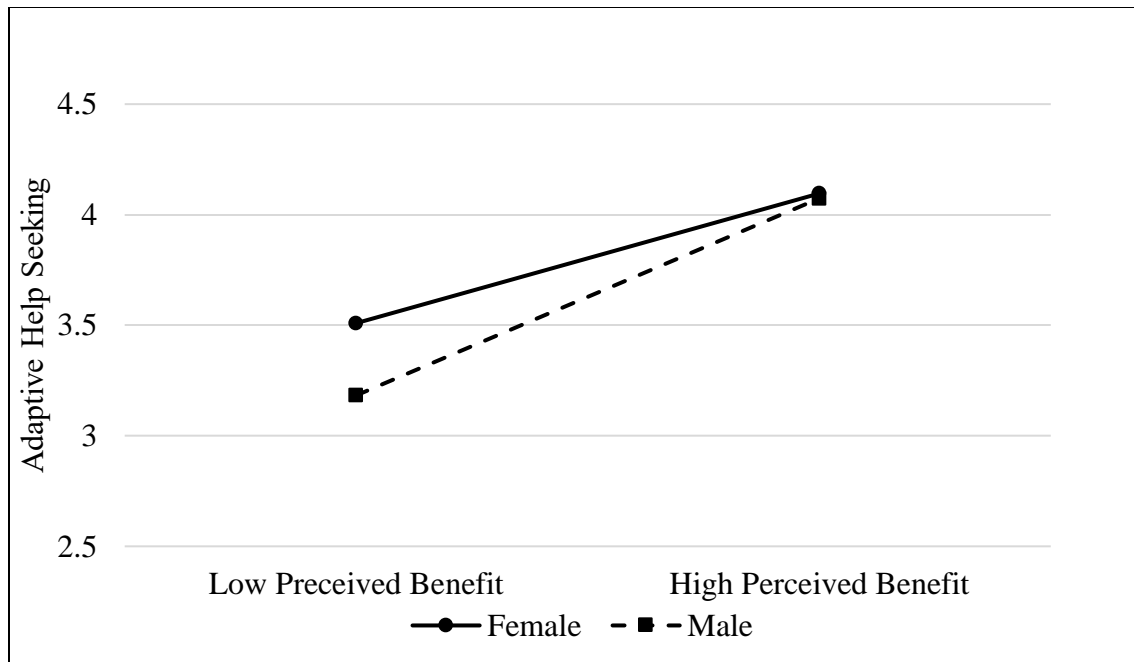


Figure 1. Predicted levels of adaptive help seeking for male and female students. Low and high perceived benefit are one SD above and below the mean, respectively, and plotted predicted values assumed mean levels of other predictors.